

EXETER SUSTAINABILITY & COASTAL RESILIENCE PROJECT: CHARTING A COURSE FOR THE SUSTAINABILITY OFFICE

2020 RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY SITUATION ASSESSMENT: TOWN OF EXETER COMPLETED ACTIONS TO INSURE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Conservation

1. The Town adopted a Wetlands Conservation District to promote the most appropriate use of land and the protection of wetland ecosystems and water quality and recently proposed a zoning amendment to the ordinance to provide clarity to the review process.
2. The Town adopted an Aquifer Protection District that focuses on protecting groundwater resources by prohibiting certain uses in the district to protect water quality.
3. The Town adopted a Shoreland Protection District to protect, maintain and enhance water quality in our surface water bodies that includes all major rivers and their tributaries including buffer requirements.
4. The Town adopted an Open Space Development ordinance that allows flexibility to develop smaller lots, create protected open space, and reduce the amount of infrastructure and impervious surfaces needed to support development.

Community Based and Outreach

5. Marshal Farms Rain Garden Project - installed 2 rain gardens, held educational forums associated with stormwater runoff and its impact on Brickyard pond.
6. Held a Soak Up the Rain neighborhood event at Westside Drive - installed 1 raingarden w/ DPW assist and educated numerous residents about the little river buffer.
7. Installed Downtown library raingarden and educational signage.
8. HLCW forum at Exeter High School - talked about health of Great Bay, hosted Chip Osborn who spoke about organic lawncare management, Jay Feldman who talked about the impact of pesticides, and the owner of Edridge Lumber who presented how they converted their store stock and community to use organic products. Hosted several local vendors who showed off their organic lawn care products.
9. HLCW held a best management practices forum and educated the public about how to read a fertilizer bag, how to calibrate your spreader, sold rain barrels, etc.
10. HLCW held a forum at Riverwoods and invited turf managers from large lawn owners in town (PEA, Chinberg, schools, parks and rec, etc).

11. Annual rain barrel sale - Reduces water use, reduces stormwater runoff and I add HLCW magnets that highlight 5 steps to water quality friendly lawn care.
12. Think Blue Exeter - website, past outreach etc.

Adaptation and Resilience

13. The Town requires structures to be constructed at least one (1) foot above the base Flood Elevation shown on the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps to address and protect against potential future impacts of climate change.
14. The Planning Board adopted Low Impact Development (LID) Regulations that requires the use of LID site planning and design strategies to reduce stormwater runoff volume, protect water quality and maintain predevelopment site hydrology. Unlike many municipalities, these regulations require that all stormwater management systems have minimum removal efficiencies for Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Total Suspended Solids; these regulations also require that the extent of sea-level rise shown on the Climate Risk in the Seacoast (CRISE) maps (RPC, 2018) be incorporated into the site design of all projects within these high risk flood areas.
15. Prior to adopting LID regulations, the Planning Board and staff consistently encouraged the use of LID best management practices despite not requiring them and most applications met a higher standard than our regulations required due to the efforts of the board and staff to address water quality and runoff concerns.
16. The Town participated in the CAPE (Climate Adaptation Plan for Exeter) study and incorporated details from this study regarding flooded roadways and overwhelmed stormwater systems in the recent Hazardous Mitigation Plan Update.
17. The Town participated in WISE (Water Integration for Squamscott and Exeter) - integrated watershed plan for Exeter, Stratham and Newfields. Contains a great list of septic properties near rivers and a number of other recommendations to enhance, protect and maintain water quality.
18. Town held a Climate Open House in February of 2018. The event had multiple stations with posters sharing what the Town, the Conservation Commission, and the Energy and HLCW committees and others do to make Exeter a more sustainable and resilient community.
19. The Town utilizes the 2016 TNC Coastal Conservation Plan Update that identified areas in town important for flood storage, water quality protection and Sea Level Affecting Marsh Migration maps and data for developing conservation priorities. [CN]
20. The Town received a NOAA Project of Special Merit grant from the NH Coastal Program to work with Waterstone Engineering and the Rockingham Planning Commission to complete the Lincoln Street I and II Exeter Stormwater Resilience projects including a stormwater analysis for the Lincoln Street

watershed and installation of Exeter Water Trail signage at the Main Street and Lincoln Street Elementary School campuses. The Water Trail narratively and graphically illustrated concepts of the water cycle, stormwater runoff, source of water pollution and both man-made and natural systems help protect water quality.

21. The Town, in partnership with the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission, received assistance through the NH Setting Sail Program (funded by NOAA), and conducted a Vulnerability Assessment of projected impacts from sea-level rise (SLR) and coastal storm surge flooding as part of the Climate Risk in the Seacoast (CRise) project.
22. The Town presented the C-Rise maps to Exeter Country Club (ECC) and talked about impact of SLR on ECC. Hope to seek supplemental funds for an engineering plan that would work with ECC and CC on a collaborative living shoreline proposal.
23. 65% of Exeter's Special Flood Hazard Areas (based on previous FEMA boundary) is a park or publicly preserved open space. Almost 30% of land in Exeter is protected through permanent conservation easements.
24. Shoreline protection – All property, except for the Railroad corridor, along the length of the Squamscott River is protected from 101 to the town's northern boundary. Recent Cole property acquisition included an allowance in deed for climate adaptation related activities as an approved use.
25. Town requested to be a "pilot study" in the near future for the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission to evaluate the ability to expand implementation of RSA 79-E Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive to include improvements that property owners make to improve the climate resiliency of their buildings.
26. Town created an Energy Committee to examine ways to lessen the Town's carbon footprint and reduce energy consumption.
27. The Energy Committee is working on several initiatives and an LED retrofit of the Town's existing streetlights is being implemented after approval by the voters in 2019.
28. In 2019 the town passed a citizens petition Article 31 – which supported the creation of a Sustainability Office for the town.
29. In 2019 Exeter created a Sustainability Advisory Committee and in 2020 appointed a Sustainability Officer.

Regulatory/Land Use

30. The Planning Board requires a site-specific soil map or high intensity soil survey (HISS) map on site plan and subdivision applications. Granted most recent development projects are on public sewer so a site specific soil survey is provided in lieu of a HISS.
31. The Planning Board adopted a standard condition of approval and a provision as proposed by the Town Planner that requires all approved developments to provide an ongoing annual report on all stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP's) to insure they are functioning as designed and approved. This is an ongoing condition of approval.
32. The Planning Board and Housing Advisory Committee supported staff to secure a grant to examine flexible zoning initiatives to encourage affordable housing developments and sustainability by promoting development in areas already serviced by town infrastructure and focusing on improvements to the public realm. A zoning amendment has been placed on the 2020 Town Warrant.
33. The Planning Board and the Healthy Lawns Clean Water (HLCW) Committee promoted and moved forward an ordinance to limit fertilizer use in the Wetlands, Shoreland, and Aquifer Protection districts. The project was presented to multiple Town boards to enhance awareness.

Planning

34. The Planning Board adopted a Master Plan update that is committed to building a sustainable future as outlined in many of the tasks set forth in the Action Agenda.
35. The Master Plan Oversight Committee (a PB subcommittee) attended a Conservation Commission meeting requesting the Commission's help to implement the action items in the Master Plan related to natural resources that include climate change, conservation priorities, and water resource policy. The Conservation Commission is actively working on these Master Plan Action Agenda items.
36. Exeter is one of 3 towns in the NH to fund a part time Natural Resource Planner for plan review, outreach/education, and to further the mission of the conservation commission.

Municipal Operations and Policy

37. The Town coordinated the removal of the Great Dam in part to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat in the Exeter River watershed. [CN]
38. The Town supported the construction of a new groundwater treatment facility in 2015 on Lary Lane, to enhance water quality, reactivate dormant groundwater resources with updated treatment, and address arsenic issues in the Lary Lane Well. [CN]

39. The Town hosted educational events around Dam removal during 2018 - met with Durham Town officials and presented a "lessons learned" style info session, hosted a walk w/ NOAA and NHFG at dam site on World Fish Migration Day as well as a fish ladder tour at Pickpocket.
40. The Town is actively implementing the Nitrogen Control plan and meeting requirements of the AOC and MS4 permits.
41. The Town constructed a new wastewater treatment facility that significantly reduces the amount of nitrogen being discharged into the Sqaumscott River as compared to the older facility. The main pumping station was also reconstructed and projected sea-level rise was incorporated into the design. Two new force mains were installed that reduced the potential of combined sewer overflows.
42. Staff went on a tour of Berry Brook project in Dover to view alternative DPW-friendly approaches to stormwater treatment and management and is discussing options with staff and developers on simple methods to reduce water resource impacts.
43. The town supported the installation of a solar panel array at the current DPW Complex at 13 Newfields Road to provide supply to the Wastewater treatment Facility.
44. Town actively participated in the Piscataqua Regions Estuaries Partnership (PREP) 2018 State of the Estuary Report and 2015 Planning Assessment that examined water quality by watershed and PREP grant funded the initiation of the HLCW Committee.
45. The Town received a \$500,000 grant award that will provide sidewalk connections to foster a more walkable community.
46. The Town actively pursues pedestrian and bicycle safety design considerations on roadway and streetscape projects (i.e. Lincoln St streetscape project, sharrows on Hampton Falls Road, striping of bicycle lanes where feasible. etc.).
47. The Town pursued and was awarded a grant through the UNH Sustainability Institute and will be working with a Fellow this summer to conduct a municipal operations Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and develop targets and implementation strategies.
48. Planning staff created a Sustainability link on the Town's planning page and a new page for the Sustainability Advisory Committee where information on sustainability initiatives is provided.